

## Church and State in Mexico

REV. JOSEPH F. THORNING, S.J.

*A radio address given from the Paulist radio station, WLWL, New York, September 10, 1930.*

THE question I have been asked most frequently since my return from a summer spent south of the Rio Grande is: What is the present position of the Church in Mexico? To answer the question adequately we must remember that Mexico is composed of twenty-eight States. Each of these States has its own governor, and as governors differ among themselves, so do State legislatures. Both the Governors and State legislatures, have, according to the Constitution, a hand in the conduct or regulation of Church affairs. They have, for example, the power to allot the number of priests each section requires and what churches are necessary; they are also privileged to determine the application of both the Federal Constitution and the statute law. State officers, therefore, deal with the individual Bishops, and much depends upon the personal relationships between these two sets of officials. They may be intimate friends, as were the Bishop of San Louis Potosi and the Governor of the State of that name, or they may disagree radically as do the present Governor of the State of Tabasco and the Bishop of that diocese, Msgr. Vicente Camacho. The Governor has never met the Bishop but he dislikes him on the general grounds that he is a Christian and a prelate of the Catholic Church. Conditions, then, are good or bad in various parts of Mexico very much according to the personalities who happen to possess local power.

In the State of Tabasco, as has been intimated, the situation is deplorable. There is one priest in this entire province comprising 100,000 Catholic souls. The brave priest, Fr. Mercurio Fernandez Aguado, lives and works subject to the constant persecution of the Governor, Ausencio Cruz. Bloodhounds have been used to track the priest down. One night, pursued by these vicious animals, the minister of Christ had to take refuge in a tree, remaining there until rescued by friends at daybreak. This priest

has no house, no church, no revenue, but is dependent on the casual charity of the district. Yet he has been indefatigable in his labors, hearing confessions, preaching, consoling the sick, and administering the Last Sacraments to the Faithful in his vast parish. He cooks his own meals and washes his own clothes; as some one described it to me: "He is there alone, some days eating and some days fasting."

This state of affairs is very humiliating to the Mexicans themselves. To illustrate the general indignation which is felt at this flaunting of federal laws and federal authority, I will quote briefly from *La Prensa*, one of the leading dailies of Mexico City.

#### PERSECUTION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Bishop Camacho cannot take possession of his diocese because of the intransigence of the radical Ausencio Cruz. In spite of the fact that the religious conflict throughout the Republic has been relegated practically to the region of history and that Catholic priests are exercising their normal functions, the same cannot be said for the distant State of Tabasco, where the Bishop cannot undertake the direction of affairs because the Governor, Ausencio Cruz, foolishly asserts there are no Catholics and consequently there is no need of priestly ministrations. Meanwhile every effort is made to destroy the churches, tearing down the towers of some and the doors of others, rendering the edifices practically in-serviceable. Those temples which remain in good condition have been converted into libraries, dance halls, motion-picture houses, and schools. When the Secretary of the Interior assigns one of the good buildings for Catholic worship, the Tabascan radicals betake themselves to its destruction. Many complaints have been made to the federal authorities by the local inhabitants, a large number of whom have been forced to leave their homes in fear for their lives. This has taken place in spite of the strict orders which the Department of Gobernacion has given that both priests and the Catholic Faithful be unmolested in the performance of their religious duties.

There is a brighter side to the picture. Tabasco and Michoacan are the only States where there is open friction. In the other States an earnest effort is being made to live up to the spirit of the religious truce. In Querétaro, for instance, we were assured by the Bishop, the austere, scholarly Msgr. Vanegas that everything was working out as smoothly as before the trouble. In his company we visited numerous parish churches, as well as his pro-Cathedral, where the solemn vespers of St. James were being chanted by the canonical chapter. It was at eventide and the temples were crowded with the Faithful. The Bishop was greeted with signs of great reverence and affection. Wherever the people

saw him they knelt down for his blessing, and happy were those close enough to kiss the episcopal ring. The diocese of Querétaro, in respect of territory, is one of the smallest and most compact in the Republic, but is quite populous, comprising about 250,000. The Bishop assured us that not more than 300 were non-Catholics. There is not a Protestant chapel in the entire State. Going through the City Hospital, we noticed the gentle, modest demeanor of the attendant nurses and hazarded the guess that these devout women were consecrated to their work by ties more sacred than those of civic duty. But to all outward appearances they were merely municipal employes and particularly efficient nurses of the sick.

In the Federal District itself, where Mexico City is located, the religious fervor of all classes of society is unmistakable. The morning Masses witness a steady stream of worshipers. Side by side with so-called blanket Indians, just arrived for early market with baskets of produce on their arms, are well-dressed professional men and business leaders, who are eager to come forward in order to assist the priest at the Holy Sacrifice. Daily Communion is just as well established a custom south as it is north of the Rio Grande. There is no distinction of age or sex in devotion to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. The biggest crowd we saw on the streets of Mexico City was due to the outpouring of a sodality of men who had gathered for First Friday evening devotions in the Church of San Felipe. The morning I celebrated the Holy Sacrifice at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadeloupe, the church was crowded, while almost all approached the Holy Table. On feastdays or holidays, of course, the attendance is much greater.

A great deal has been accomplished by the conciliatory attitude of the Apostolic Delegate, Msgr. Ruiz y Flores. With Christ-like charity he draws all hearts to himself. Every problem which arises is worked out in the light of his original formula—the statement which directly led to the settlement: "There is no conflict which cannot be resolved by men of good will." He and Archbishop Diaz are a tower of strength to the Church in their native country. Together they arranged the delicate negotiations which led to the restoration of the Cathedral, pride of Catholic Mexico. Archbishop Diaz has likewise interested himself in ironing out difficulties in the distant States. The federal

Government has afforded him full cooperation. Here is an illustration of this attitude, related in *El Universal*, one of the principal morning newspapers of Mexico:

His Grace, the Archbishop of Mexico, Dr. Pascual Diaz, had a long interview yesterday with the Secretary of Gobernacion, Don Carlos Riva Palacio. According to our information the distinguished Catholic prelate conferred with the Secretary with regard to the return of Catholic priests to the State of Tabasco and the restoration of the churches which have not already been converted into schools or asylums. The interview of the Archbishop with the Cabinet Minister was most cordial.

The President of the Republic, Señor Ortiz Rubio, has done much to render the interpretation of the federal laws reasonable and it is of interest to note that, though religious education is not allowed in Mexico, the President has sent his two sons to St. Benedict's College, Atchison, Kansas.

This touches on the most burning issue in the whole question of Church and State relations in Mexico. The Constitution of 1917 copying the text of the 1857 Laws of Reform, forbids religious education except when undertaken in church enclosures themselves. This is a clear infringement of the Church's right to teach and is a terrible handicap in the work of the Church for young boys and girls. As long as this article remains unrepealed, there will be not peace but merely a truce in Mexico. Catholics have the constitutional right to petition the removal of the obnoxious legislation and, until they succeed, they will never rest easy in conscience or be satisfied that the command of Christ, "Teach ye all nations," is being fulfilled.

Another interesting development is the recent announcement on the part of the Government that all church property of the various denominations will be nationalized, as is already the case with regard to Catholic churches, buildings and real estate. Up to the date of this announcement, which took place Saturday, September 6, it was the common complaint of Catholics that the laws regarding religious worship were administered unequally, the Catholics receiving the rigor of the law and the Protestants enjoying its favor. This policy was wittily described as "La Ley del Embudo" (the Law of the Funnel). The figure implies, of course, that the Catholics got the narrow and the Protestants the wide mouth of the funnel. Thus, for example, Catholics are not permitted to display a religious title for

any activity, but in Puebla we could not fail to observe that the Methodist Institute was boldly labeled as such.

It was in Puebla that two motor buses in our party were landed at this Institute, purely by accident. Part of the group we were with had arranged the visit, but the other half was to view the forts on the outskirts of the city. Innocently enough we went in and heard the Director, who is a sort of Major-General for the Methodist activities in Latin America, describe how cleverly his sect was evading the anti-religious legislation, running schools, spreading propaganda, training secretaries and the like. Since ministers of religion were barred from teaching school, he said, the favorite expedient was for many of the dominies to drop their orders and remain on the job. This amused my colleague, Fr. Frederick Siedenburgh of Loyola University, Chicago, who later told some of the audience that "dropping orders" seemed as simple a process as shedding a topcoat, but that he, as a Catholic priest, found such an idea preposterous. "Even the Pope couldn't make me drop my orders," he declared.

At any rate the Government, in now applying the law to Protestants and Catholics alike, shows that it has definitely abandoned the Calles idea that Mexico could be made Protestant or schismatic, provided the resources of the State were enlisted on the side of the latter. As everybody knows, a serious attempt was made to do this very thing. Five years ago, General Calles established the Mexican National Church, which was to be in keeping with his program of "Mexico for the Mexicans." All Bishops and priests were invited to join the new sect. To the eternal glory of the Mexican clergy be it said that only two priests heeded this invitation and, of the two, one later repented and did salutary penance. One of the most popular churches in the capital, on the main boulevard, was turned over to the new schismatics in the hope that the pious Indians would continue to frequent the church of their predilection. Imagine the surprise of Calles and his single convert when the church was immediately deserted by the people! Nothing could induce them to enter, and it finally had to be closed and boarded up. Arrangements are now under way to reopen it for the Catholic Faithful.

Whereas the Mexican Methodists, according to a recent report, are contemplating separation from their Methodist

brethren in the United States, it is very significant that Mexican Catholics absolutely refused to be cut off from the center of Christendom and the Vicar of Christ on earth. Those who accuse the Indians of still adhering to their old paganism and of having received only a veneer of Catholicism may well ponder this tenacious holding to the truths of Divine Revelation. They are, as a matter of fact, quick to detect a false note introduced in the religion they received from the early Padres under the patronage of Our Lady of Guadeloupe. The Church of Corpus Christi, which was turned over to the Protestants, had the same experience and had to be returned to Catholic worship. These phenomena are explicable only in terms of Divine grace.

In the state of Jalisco religion is in a flourishing condition. Relations between the Archbishop Francisco Orozco y Jimenez and the local Governor are most cordial. The week we were in Guadalajara His Grace received a letter from a high Government official asking a conference which would arrange for the restoration of several art treasures which had been taken from the episcopal palace during the years 1926-9. It is typical of Mexico today that every national municipal museum or art gallery owes whatever prestige it possesses to sculptures, paintings, and bronzes that are ecclesiastical in character. The spoliation of churches has resulted in the enrichment of public collections. The finest canvas in the museum in Guadalajara formerly adorned the walls of Archbishop Orozco's residence. It is characteristic of the large-minded liberality of this courageous prelate, perhaps the most colorful figure in the Mexican hierarchy, that he says: "I don't mind them keeping the picture if they would only ask me for it."

In the same diocese we had a glimpse of the vicissitudes of seminary education. Noting a very handsome building near the main plaza we inquired what it was. "Formerly the seminary, confiscated in the days of Benito Juarez, used for a space as the veterinary and agricultural college, now serving the purposes of a museum." Further down town we observed a somewhat similar building, although not quite so elaborate. Upon inquiry we found this, too, had been the diocesan seminary, taken away during the recent conflict. "Well," we could not help asking, "where is the seminary now?" Whisked to the outskirts of the city, my colleague and I were shown into a small room leading out

of a church—a room that probably had been the sacristy. There we found about thirty-five young men, some seated and some standing. There were no blackboards and few desks. Many of the prospective Levites stood around the room, writing their exercises on tiny bits of paper against the walls in lieu of desks. A bare room, forty by sixty feet in dimensions, a few stubby pencils and random books—that was the archdiocesan seminary. And yet on the eager faces of the young men cooped up in this absurdly inadequate chamber there was that look of holiness and love which is characteristic of those who aspire to stand before the altar of God. They knew what Bethlehem was and Nazareth—and the Cross more than a mere word. Consequently there was no complaining on their part, no repining over the past, no self-pity or shirking of their duty, but simple acceptance of their vocation as followers of their Crucified Saviour. If ever I saw Divine grace limning the eyes and features of youth, I saw it plainly that morning in the little classroom on the outskirts of Guadalajara. Worthy sons were they of the saintly hero, Don Francisco Orozco y Jimenez, who, brave as a lion, roamed the mountains of his native State for two and one half years rather than abandon the flock committed to him by Christ's Vicar on earth.

Where were the books which should have been in the hands of these young seminarians? Far away in the heart of the city in the municipal library. Permitted to enter the stacks back of the reading room, we saw tome after tome of patrology, theology, philosophy and Church history. All were in a pitiful state of disrepair. All were dust-covered, and many had whole sections honeycombed with worms. The trained librarian who showed us through the building was very frank: "In the libraries of Mexico," he asserted, "you will find two kinds of works: stupid romances and the Fathers of the Church, generally in duplicate sets." And yet rare and beautiful books were not lacking. At Guadalajara, for example, they will show you the original deed of the foundation of San Antonio and an exquisitely mounted volume of world cartography printed in 1565. Guadalajara, it should be remembered, is the second city in the Republic and representative of what is best in the Spanish traditions of the country.

This Spanish tradition is once more coming into its

own. The frantic efforts of self-seekers to implant what they boastfully termed an indigenous or purely Indian culture have failed. Educators are beginning to see that the Spanish language is a bond of unity and is necessary to keep out the dreaded "Yankee Imperialism." We may take the Cathedral in Guadajajara as a symbol of that Spanish culture wedded to the Catholic Faith. Beneath the shadows of its Byzantine towers the arts and crafts of the country grew apace, sure of hearty patronage and constant inspiration. Work was plentiful, for there was stone to be quarried, plaster to be prepared, silver to be wrought, pictures to be painted and woodwork to be carved. Food was required for the many artisans, and the surrounding agricultural workers had a market for their fruits, vegetables and grain. The House of God became the vision of beauty in their lives, and with beauty was truth, the revelation of the Word made Flesh.

## On Opening a Downtown College

REV. ROBERT I. GANNON, S.J.

*Sermon at the Mass of the Holy Ghost, on the opening of classes at St. Peter's College, Jersey City, N. J., September 28, 1930.*

**I**N every generation you may find faint hearts who feel that the time for pioneering has passed away. "Fifty years ago," such people always say, "a man could start life on a bootlace and build up a prosperous business; a college could open in a garret and become a great center of learning. But not now. Oh, no—not now!" And the "now" they refer to is not a point of time, but *ever*, for these headshakers are always with us. To them the acceptable time for starting any sort of project is always in the past. Everything is so organized, wealth is so great, what is the use of trying any more?

Their attitude, of course, is as old as human nature. There were even Athenians who felt that way, centuries before Christ, when word got about that Cimon was ambitious to make his little rock-bound homeland a temple of learning. Listless groups would gather, and look in at the gate to watch him planning the first great portico and setting out shrubs and fountains in the groves of Academe. "Is all this for lovers, Cimon? For athletes and tired, sick old



men?" "No, rather a pleasure ground for scholars and for men who think," he might have said and if he did, how they must have shaken their heads! What chance had poor little Athens to be famous for learning when the schools of Asia Minor had been flourishing so many years? But Cimon had the pioneering spirit; vision; faith in his dream; and out of his shadowy park there streamed one day, a light that is lighting us yet, the clear white radiance of Greek philosophy. For the masters who came to walk there in the shade had something to offer that was different, something that was not offered by the more celebrated teachers of Asia Minor.

Today, my dear brethren, another generation is pausing to look in at the gate of another little grove that may some day be another Academe. We can call it a grove only by an affectionate whimsey, for the trees we see from the Chamber of Commerce are smokestacks and the masts of ships; our shrubs and fountains are chairs and blackboards and steel lockers and nice new Bunsen burners. No breath comes to us of the wild thyme on Mt. Hymettus. We cannot quite glimpse the depths of Homer's wine-colored sea. I'm afraid we cannot hear the thousand laughing waves of Aeschylus above the roar of traffic. In short, the Cyclades are very far from Grand Street—very far. And still we offer our apologies to no one.

If the unsympathetic say: "How dare you call a few bare rented rooms a college?" our first answer is that we do not. A college is not a pile of mortar and brick. A college is a group of men—at least to most of the world. If you stop an intellectual in Germany and ask which is the country's greatest university, he will say: "Why, that depends. Wherever Herr Doktor Von This or Herr Doktor Von That happens to be teaching—that is our greatest university. This year Göttingen, next year Leipzig—after that Bonn, perhaps." In England, too, it is the persons that matter. If the Master and Fellows of Baliol pack up and go off to Ipswich, Baliol has simply left Oxford; the buildings that remain are a worthless shell.

In fact, it is only in America that institutions of learning are rated by their architecture and the mechanical addition of degrees. Here the standardizing agencies want to know the *number* of your buildings, as if that were germane to a discussion of sound education. They want to know

the *number* of your volumes, not their nature or the care used in selecting them; the *number* of your Ph.D.'s, not their caliber as men or teachers. They assume with the gravity of children that if a man has tabulated all the enclitics in Theocritus, he must be an inspiration in any classroom. It is incredible, of course. The situation really might be taken from "Alice in Wonderland." But our poor distracted generation, stark mad on many topics, has been particularly so on this. We have only to admit that the problem of democratic education is difficult, to make the deduction that most of our professional educators have found it insoluble. For in such circles, unfortunately, clear, simple thinking went out of fashion years ago, and no one single enlightened president or superintendent or principal can bring it back again. This is a time of synthesis and very few are trained to analyze. Here and there we find men of insight and vision, whose schools are almost ideal, but they are exceptional, working against the tide.

The controlling majority, unable to reach the heart of the matter, find their escape in providing more accessories, more helpful accidentals, more and more material equipment. They seem to say: "But look at our catalogues! Hundreds of professors! Thousands of degrees! Look at our campus! What columns, what domes, what spires! Is it not an education just to live in such surroundings?" To which we can only answer: "No, it is not." Thousands of American undergraduates are wandering through marble corridors and shady walks for semester after semester and when for the last time they leave the gate of dear old Alma Mater, they are as blank and ignorant as the day they left the dear old high school. Henry Adams may have been exaggerating when he wrote that *he* had learned nothing at a college famous for its wealth and display, but many others saying the same would understate the case. Of course, material equipment added to the essentials is a very important accessory, a very valuable accidental. In truth, it is not easy to get along without it. It is never easy to be poor. That is so obvious that some day the people of Jersey are going to supply our simple needs in this regard, because they believe in us and in our work. But still the fact remains that the ideal college has been rightly described as a log in the forest with the ideal teacher sitting on the other end.

And who, my dear brethren, is the ideal teacher? Is it the brilliant man who sets out to make a career in scholastic circles, whose only aim is reputation and financial success, who realizes that to rise he must find time for writing and research; for degrees and more degrees; for gowns and more gowns; time that should be spent working for the men in his class? Is the ideal teacher the specialist who is far more interested in literature or chemistry or conic sections than he is in the puzzled young freshman, looking up at him quizzically from the benches? (The poor puzzled freshman, who is far more bewildered by life, by the things that are going on inside of him than he is with the Greek text under his eyes!) Is the ideal teacher the man who assumes that if he teaches his classes mere facts, he is preparing them for life? Or the man who holds that morals and religion are too personal to bring into the classroom? Or the man who, no matter how learned, is so confused by his own estimate of ultimate values that he would not dare to guide another in matters of conduct and character?

If such were the ideal teacher, we should be fools to reopen Saint Peter's College, and you would be fools to send your sons to it. For all the wealthy and powerful universities in America are full of such teachers now, and if that were true of Saint Peter's as well, we should account ourselves a rather pathetic imitation of some gorgeous place already too far ahead of us, bulwarked with endowment and prestige and privilege.

No. If we open our classes today in modest surroundings, if we hold up our heads and claim for our degrees a value second to none in this State, it is not that we hope to rival Princeton in all of Princeton's acknowledged excellencies, but that we know we have something to offer that is different—something that is not offered by the more celebrated teachers of Asia Minor.

What we offer is a novelty in American education, though it is an heirloom with us old enough to be more venerated that it is. To those who understand, we call it—zeal for souls. To the others we must explain that we are unique because we specialize in educating the *undergraduate*—something that most universities do not much bother about. They are all interested in the advancement of learning, but primarily the learning of the faculty. For nearly

everywhere today, the university departments have swamped the college classes, and the Bachelor's degree has lost all meaning and value. Harvard sees that clearly now and so does Yale and so do places like Glenn Frank's Wisconsin. Otherwise they would not be carrying on such drastic experiments in their student bodies—splitting them up into fragments, trying to get back the personal touch, trying to recapture the culture and, though they would not admit it, the educational methods of fifty years ago. They seem to think that numbers are their only difficulty, but the real trouble is the mental attitude of their teachers. These excellent men are in business. They realize that in America advancement depends on piling up empty semester hours for meaningless credits, and naturally their ambitions are somewhat beyond a class of ordinary freshmen. Not so with us. Our first interest is the advancement of learning among the undergraduates. The college man is our chief concern.

For we have no private careers to carve for ourselves. We should feel it a mockery of our vocation to sacrifice the advancement of the boys to our own development or comfort. The classroom is to us what the Indies were to Francis Xavier. As novices, we made the meditation on The Kingdom and we rose from our knees with the words in our hearts that we pray God may always be there: *Domine ego sequar Te ubicumque ieris* (Lord, I shall follow Thee, wherever Thou goest). And He has led us to the teacher's desk and placed the chalk in our hands and ranged before us thirty human souls that are dearer to Him than the thick red blood of His Heart. Would it not seem anomalous if I could regard such a calling as the stepping stone of my personal success? If I could slight such work in order to "sell myself" like a business man? Is it not obvious that this attitude of zeal, so essential to the ideal of any Catholic teacher, lay or Religious, must color all our courses and give everything a slightly different flavor?

This difference of flavor however, is too marked to be explained merely by zeal for souls. There is a second antique novelty in our schools that strikes more deeply still.

We specialize in educating the undergraduate and our whole idea of education is distinctly different and much more simple than contemporary methods. We are medieval

enough to think that there is more education in a few subjects thoroughly taught than in a multiplication of courses. We still defend stubbornly the old-time method of using each subject as a means to the great general end, formation of character. So that we need no special course in "Personality Improvement and Vocational Orientation" such as you find elsewhere today. Our history, literature and religion are taught with this very obvious purpose; even our sciences and pure mathematics never lose sight of it. Every moment of the day we are seeking the improvement of personality in the best sense of that word, and the orientation of every student towards his true vocation, whatever it be. Thus we cling loyally, desperately to all that was best in the great past. That is why we are ultra-modern. In another generation all real educators will be interested again in the *Ratio Studiorum*, chiefly because of this necessary simplicity.

For, as this strange thing called civilization becomes more complex year by year, our need increases, not for a corresponding complexity in our attitude towards it, but for more simplicity; simplicity in our fundamental principles; simplicity in our citizenship, in our religion, in our education. No one should think of scrapping our noble ideal of representative government simply because unworthy politicians have complicated its administration. No one should reject the pure Gospel of Christ because stupid and stultifying heresies have complicated its message. Then why should the rich culture of our Fathers be left on the top shelf undusted, simply because learned but irresponsible tinkers like Eliot of Harvard chose to experiment on the last generation and so to complicate the sense of values that few Americans today realize the meaning of an education.

Our specialists have made the very elements of life so intricate that ordinary mortals cannot make the necessary compounds without grotesquerie. And now, when an ignorant generation which can read, but which becomes more ignorant by reading the sort of thing that is being written, when such a generation is floundering helplessly in mental confusion, along come the educators and offer them what? More courses, more equipment, more complications, more novelties. What we need to be ahead of the times is certainly not novelty. God knows we are nauseated with novel-

ties. We need things that are old, very old, immutable. We need a sense of citizenship founded on respect for God's authority; a religion founded on Christ's clearly discernible living voice; an education founded on the Catholic ideal of character.

Have you heard that before? Of course you have. We have been crying it for years through the market places of the world like another Cassandra, and every man who teaches in Saint Peter's today is consumed with a sense of responsibility touching these three great fundamentals. They furnish the only motive for his being there at all. He is there because he wants to teach the Catholic religion, no matter what his particular subject be. Does that mean a conflict of interests in our schedule; a course full of hybrids like chemical-catechism and dogmatic-biology? Most certainly not. The Catholic religion is not a mere catechism; not a mere branch of learning that can be taught like a physical science. It is a whole manner of life. It is a special attitude towards everything in creation. It cannot be learned in a few instructions or out of a book. Many serious investigators never grasp its nature. Many men born Catholics but educated in alien influences never see beyond externals, never sense the existence of such an influence as Catholic culture.

It is so ancient and intangible a thing some would be surprised to find it perfectly at home on the fifth floor of an office building. As they stepped from the elevator in the Chamber of Commerce and looked about them, their wonder would increase. For our faculty is young, the boys are ever younger, the laboratories and furniture sparkle with freshness. There is nothing old in sight. But out of sight there are many strange forces at work in our little college, some of them old, some of them ageless. The spirit of the former college is there, with its loyal and distinguished alumni; famous men who have made enviable records in every department of life; unknown men, who have quietly done great things by Catholic firesides. The spirit of colonial Maryland is there; of John Carroll and old Father Farmer who rode these parts on horseback in the days of the Revolution. The spirit of Ignatius is there, the spirit of the Renaissance and of the Catholic Reformation; the spirit of the old University of Paris, blazing with the intellectual light of the thirteenth century; the spirit of the

damp, crooked catacombs with their dull, grim glow of devotion to the truth. And there is a spirit greater than all of these, a spirit that gave them all their greatness.

We seem to be kneeling now on a mountain in Galilee—Tabor, perhaps. Around us are the five hundred faithful disciples mentioned in the Gospel, all the dear friends of the little college just being opened there—the college of the Apostles. As we see the eleven teachers of that first faculty, standing about in the long, rich grass, their eyes narrowed in the glare of the morning sun, their hair blowing in the stiff breeze fresh from the lake, we marvel to think that this group of simple men is to be the greatest center of learning the world has ever known. We marvel until we hear One speak as no *man* ever spoke, His words coming to us through the crisp, clear morning air—through the intervening years of two milleniums: “Going, therefore, teach ye all nations . . . teaching them . . . all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world.” How could that little college fail?

And how can ours? We open our doors today with the cordial friendship of our Lord the Bishop. He it was, in fact, who used his great influence in Rome and brought about the resurrection of the dead. His cordiality and enthusiasm for our future plans fill us with confidence and gratitude. Next to his, we treasure the friendship of our brother priests, zealous pastors and curates, some of them our old boys, some of them as close as if they had been. No less dear to us is the warm-hearted love of the wonderful laity here in the diocese; people whose proudest boast is simply to be known as old-fashioned Jersey Catholics, for everyone knows what that means. All this is gratifying, my dear brethren, and heartens us immeasurably. But what is the friendship of the greatest and most devoted men compared with the friendship of Christ?

We are working for Him—simply for Him; not for any abstract humanitarianism. We love our neighbor in Christ. We work for men and would sacrifice our lives for men, because men are so dear to Christ that Christ died for them. We are gathered together now, ninety strong in our first Freshman class. We are gathered together in His name and He has promised that He will be there in the midst of us. Christ is with us today and will be as long as He

wants our little college, and as long as the college is true to Him. Pray, my dear brethren, that that may be always. As friends that love us, pray with us that Christ may always be the best-loved teacher in the new Saint Peter's as He was in the old, for "with Him is the fountain of life, and in His light, we shall see light."

## The Belgian "Jociste" Movement

REV. FRANCIS DAY

*This account of the apostolate among young industrial workers in Belgium is reprinted from the Christian Democrat, for March, 1930, where it appeared under the title "Can We Do Likewise?"*

SOME time ago in a Catholic periodical a correspondent signed himself "sick of hearing about the leakage."

We agree that it is possible to see a fictitious significance in the falling away of the indifferent Catholic, deplorable as the lapse is for the individual himself. But there is another allied, but different, problem, one that includes an aspect of leakage, but goes beyond it. It is with this problem and one possible solution of it that we are concerned here.

In our industrial districts especially, but also elsewhere, we are faced with the lack of adequate Catholic equipment, intellectual and spiritual, on the part of many of our young people when they leave school and pass, let us say, to the workshop, the factory, or the mine. We do not wish to be misunderstood. If these lads and lasses have been through a Catholic school—and we assume this—they will know their Faith as summarized in the catechism, and will, in most cases have acquired, at any rate for the time being, regular habits of the spiritual life. This might well be sufficient, together with ordinary pastoral supervision, in circumstances where practically no other outlook existed but that of the Catholic Church. But we know that today a positive, if often indirect, propaganda of intellectual and moral teaching wholly alien to Catholicism infects the environment in which these young people live and work. And this, as it seems to us, has a two-fold result.

Firstly, it is undoubtedly responsible for a lamentable



falling away from Christian Faith and life. A priest is told he is not wanted as his parishioner is a "socialist." A Catholic mother complains that her sons do not go to church for "the world is changing." And anyone who has attended the C.S.G. sectional meeting at the last two Catholic congresses will have heard examples of the loss, through such loose thinking, of many who might have been pillars of the Church of God.

But, secondly, we wish to take a wider view. Perhaps some of us may have been struck by the thought of how comparatively few of the splendid young people we see about us, in this country, have the privilege of being members of the Catholic Church. Surely our own youths and maidens must be the chief missionaries to them—at least by their own evident faith and corresponding life. Many are so, but proportionately how few, especially in the districts with which we are here mainly concerned.

To us it seems that this is largely because they have little interest in, or grasp of, the Faith in its bearing on the whole of life as lived by themselves and those like themselves. Also because their spiritual life is largely a matter of routine—sincere and quite excellent, but still routine—with little idea of ever more and more generous abandonment in the personal following of Christ.

We have not to look far to see how a similar but not identical problem is being solved in two Catholic lands. We refer to the *Jociste* movement of Belgium and, more recently, of France. Mention of this movement has been made in the *Christian Democrat* before. We will try here to describe it briefly,\* and then to throw out some very tentative suggestions as to how it might be applied in the country in which we live.

Owing, perhaps, partly to the more *active* hostility of the powers of evil in a Catholic country, the situation to be faced in Belgium was more disquieting even than it is here. It has been estimated that within six months a half, within twelve months three quarters, of the boys brought up in the Catholic primary schools were, for all practical purposes, being lost to the Church. This is to be attributed to the obvious fact that the character of such young people, when they leave school, is still unformed, *plus* definite Socialist (in

\*We are indebted for most of our information to articles in *Dossiers de l'Action Populaire* for January 10 and 25, 1930, and to an article in *Etudes* for November 20, 1929.

the strict sense) and Communist propaganda, and the appalling strength of the forces making for moral evil.

Faced with these facts, the Abbé Cardyn, curate of Laeken, close to Brussels, quickly saw in what direction a solution might be found. The environment in which the young worker lived was the means of his moral and spiritual ruin: it remained to transform it until it became the normal medium of his salvation and of his true happiness in this world and the next. Equally clearly the Abbé saw that this work must be done mainly by the young people themselves.

So, in 1914, he formed a group of young workers who might be the nucleus of this apostolate. Having been entrusted with the direction of social works in his district, he was able cautiously to develop his plan until in 1924 it was decided to extend it to the whole of Belgium. At the end of 1929 the movement of the *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne*, commonly known, from the initial letters of these three words, as the *Jociste* movement, numbered among its members more than 40,000 youths, while 15,000 girls make up what is, in a double sense, its sister organization. It is hoped that, before long, a third of the young workers of the most de-Christianized portion of Belgium may have been drawn into the movement.

We have no space to detail the *Jociste* organization—a veritable ladder reaching from the "sympathizers" in each parish to the *Secrétariat Général* in Brussels itself. The point we wish to stress is the importance of the study-circle of the "militants" or active members, the way in which it was recruited, and the work it does.

The first step towards establishing the *Jocistes* in any district is to find a few lads who may be trained to influence their companions in the workshop, factory, or mine, as the case may be. Failure can only be avoided by understanding the principles on which the selection should be made. The lads should be taken from the heart of the characteristic industry of the neighborhood, and although they must obviously be generous, courageous, and willing to learn, and should have what we may call "a way with them," they should not be of a type that stands, in any essential, apart from those with whom they associate in their daily work. *At the outset* they need not be particularly well-instructed, or unusually pious.

The study-circle should concern itself with definitely practical questions, such as the nature of the lads' work, how it can be obtained, wages, the state of the premises, what goes on among the employes, and so forth. Although an older man should be present, the talking, under gentle guidance, should be mainly done by the lads themselves.

When the facts are ascertained, the principles underlying them should be made clear, and this, in its turn, will make more systematic study possible, while, where necessary, prudent action, of whatever kind, may eventually be taken. One such line of action is to get into touch with lads who are shortly to leave school, and to discover tactfully how best to help them in the great change in their lives which is now so near.

Meanwhile, of course, there will be other sides to the work of the class—visits to institutions, factories, museums, and places of interest, and a certain amount of social recreation; while the spiritual tone of the members will be strengthened by pilgrimages and, above all, retreats. The *Jocistes* have a splendid fortnightly periodical of which illustrations are a special feature, and they have songs, choruses, etc., and, in short, a spirit and outlook of their own.

Very briefly, Can anything of this sort be attempted in England? We can scarcely do more than summarize the principal points that seem to us to be involved.

*First*, as to the need. It is not quite the same as in Belgium or France, but, as we have tried to show at the beginning of this paper, it certainly exists.

*Second*, as to the scope for action. It is true that in Belgium the overwhelming majority of young workers are nominally Catholic. This makes a difference. But in most industrial districts in this country Catholics are fairly well represented. Further, while the direct work of the "militants" would be among their fellow-Catholics, still, in moral and social matters, their influence should be of the greatest value, even among those who are not of the Faith.

*Third*, there is the question of method. In the actual formation and management of the study-class, it would be difficult, we think, to improve on the method followed in Belgium, which we have tried to outline above. But,

*Fourth*, our main suggestion is that we should begin—if any action is contemplated at all—with districts where C.S.G. study-clubs already exist; that there, if possible,

junior study-clubs should be formed, one or more members of the senior club, under a priest director, undertaking the work. When the movement grew, there might be more organization and a junior section in the *Christian Democrat*, and, perhaps, later on, the young people might have a periodical of their own. The annual retreat would be an essential feature of the first importance.

There need be no fear of clashing with other organizations, for none cover precisely this ground. The British equivalent of the *Jociste* could still be a Scout, Rover or Squire. But we fear that, *at present*, these admirable movements make but little appeal in the precise circles with which we are here concerned.